



Response to the BLM's assessment on the oil and gas leasing program for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)

The Archaeology Division of the American Anthropological Association is writing this letter in response to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) assessment on the oil and gas leasing program for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), where they deny the existence of a climate crisis in the [appendix](#) (pp. 562, 692, 693, 694). To make their point that such a crisis does not exist, they bring in the archaeological record, specifically the Medieval Warm Period. The Medieval Warm Period is a misnomer. While some areas of the globe were warmer and, for example, allowed grapes to grow in the United Kingdom, others experienced noticeable droughts (e.g., the western United States, southern Europe, the Middle East, parts of Africa, northern Mexico), cooling (e.g., northern Europe, eastern South Africa, etc.), or increased hurricane activity (e.g., Gulf Coast, Florida). Climate scientists use a more representative term—the Medieval Climate Anomaly (MCA). This term captures the variability in temperatures that were occurring during this time period.

The MCA anomaly was quite different from what is happening today; the MCA was caused by solar radiation, volcanic activity, etc. In contrast, much of today's increasing global temperatures are caused by human activities in a world with its highest population size ever. Also, MCA ended. Today is another story unless we decrease greenhouse gases and other contaminants, and better regulate the use of finite resources. **There is a climate crisis.**

Finally, the BLM's proposed actions to open up ecologically sensitive areas to oil and gas exploration are a direct threat to the health of American citizens. The continuing reliance on fossil fuels is a primary source of contaminants of the earth's atmosphere, and is a major contributor to a global upsurge in respiratory ailments.

We encourage interested persons to read *Climate Change in Human History: Prehistory to the Present* by Benjamin Lieberman and Elizabeth Gordon (2018, Bloomsbury)

Sincerely and on behalf of the [Archaeology Division](#),

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